

1. Abstract

In 2005, the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) spearheaded the highly successful Safety First Program. The Safety First Program includes partnerships with Children's Hospital and Health Center, several community-based social service agencies, and HHSA Family Resource Centers (FRC) to promote and strengthen the public's health and safety.

What initially began as a public-private partnership to distribute and install car seats properly for infants and children blossomed into a Countywide collaborative that included a community-based childhood injury prevention program. Through this collaborative, slightly over 7,000 car safety seats were distributed, far exceeding the initial target of 4,000, and enhanced services to prevent childhood injuries were delivered to more than 1,000 low income families.

The Safety First Program included comprehensive safety assessments, distribution of car safety seats, personal safety equipment, and home safety devices. Enhancements to the program also included a component about childhood obesity, and prevention measures focused on nutrition and physical activity. Lastly, through an agreement with Children's Hospital, several elements of this health and safety program were ensured beyond the availability of funding.

2. Need for Program

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of injury and death in San Diego County and injuries are the leading health threat to children ages 0-14. San Diego County's injury rates are higher than the State average. In 2003, 22,710 people were killed or injured in accidents involving motor vehicles, and over 1,869 of them were children. More than 31 children die each year from unintentional injuries and over 47,000 are treated and released from local emergency departments.

Many of these injuries and fatalities could have been prevented or minimized. There are best practices and proven strategies, such as child safety seats, bicycle helmets, safety equipment, and safe walking behaviors that can reduce incident levels or injury severity. Surveys conducted in San Diego County suggest that these proven strategies are not put into place by parents. Additionally, survey results show that parents may not be aware of the risks or do not perceive *their* child to be at risk. They may also have misinformation about safety practices and products, lack access to safety devices, or do not know how to incorporate safety behavior and products in their daily lives. In addition to not having safety information, a major obstacle for low-income families is the cost of safety equipment to protect their children.

3. Description of Program

The Safety First Program was designed to assist low-income families with children six years of age and younger in raising parental awareness and knowledge about childhood passenger safety through an education, installation and distribution program that utilizes existing community-based organizations.

National Association of COUNTIES 2006 Achievement Award Program
Nomination Summary
Safety First Program– San Diego, California

The Safety First Program's five goals included: increasing the use of child safety seats in Cities located within San Diego County by distributing a minimum of 4,000 child safety/booster seats; proper installation of seats distributed through community-based organizations; development and dissemination of language specific traffic safety information to underserved populations; increase in the number of certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians and child safety seat checkers within San Diego County; and enhanced collaboration among community-based agencies. The target population for the Safety First Program was low-income families with children six years of age and younger.

HHSA provides services through FRC's located in the six geographical service regions spread throughout the County. An implementation plan was developed based on each region's unique characteristics. In conjunction with the implementation of car passenger safety checks, car passenger safety equipment and language specific traffic safety information were distributed at accessible locations such as parks, shopping centers, preschools, and open house events at community based organizations.

The Safety First Program was able to increase the number of certified technicians devoted to each region by working with agencies identified by the Office of Traffic Safety that certified designated community based organization staff as trainers and checkers in motor vehicle passenger education and safety seat installation. In addition, the community-based organizations partnered with other local entities involved in similar efforts, such as the California Highway Patrol and the San Diego Safe Kids Coalition, to conduct community events throughout San Diego County.

Having exceeded the initial program goals, the program was expanded to address other non-traffic related injuries. Utilizing unspent State Office of Traffic Safety funds and CalWORK's funds, a contract was issued in 2005 to develop and implement a comprehensive community-based childhood injury prevention training and education program for families enrolled in CalWORKs.

Agreements were secured and partnerships created with the Family Resource Centers, Welfare-to-Work sites, Public Health nurses, and agencies contracted to provide family self-sufficiency services to conduct child safety seat distribution through a car seat voucher program coordinated by staff throughout the six regions.

In addition, a Memorandum of Agreement was secured with Children's Hospital to sustain the child injury risk component after the contract ended.

The Child Injury Prevention expansion included the following elements:

- a. The Child Injury Risk Assessment survey, which measured a variety of safety behaviors relative to the child's age, such as putting an infant to sleep on his or her back, child safety seat/booster seat/seatbelt use, bike helmet use, water temperature settings, burn/fire safety, poison control, pedestrian safety, and other safety issues. The assessments provided valuable feedback for parents about their own knowledge and habits relative to

National Association of COUNTIES 2006 Achievement Award Program
 Nomination Summary
 Safety First Program– San Diego, California

their child's safety. Up to date, accurate, educational material was developed addressing each of the specific safety behaviors included in the child injury risk assessment.

- b. A Family Safety plan was completed in duplicate with one copy for the parents and one retained by the program for data collection and follow up. The Family Safety Plan noted children's ages and their need for a car seat or inspection. When appropriate, referrals were made to the child passenger safety technicians. The child passenger safety technicians established inspection stations in the parking lots, conducted child safety seat inspections, education, distribution and installations.
- c. Educational materials, safety products and devices were made available to CalWORKs families based on the results of their assessments. Products included infant and child safety seats, booster seats, helmets, cabinet latches, outlet covers, smoke alarms, choke tubes, poison control stickers, bath spout covers, and other appropriate items. All products except for the child safety seats and booster seats were provided by the safety specialists inside the Family Resource Centers. Educational materials included information about the mechanism of injury, who is at most risk, prevention strategies, related safety products, how to obtain products and other pertinent community resources.

4. Use of Technology

Technology Item	Program Application
Internet	Used to complete research on car seat safety issues and strategies
Microsoft Excel	Used for monthly progress reports and tracking
Microsoft Access	Track customer base
Microsoft Outlook	Maintain contact with contractor's, meeting notification, site visit confirmations
Microsoft Publisher	Create flyer distribution
Microsoft Word	Develop contract documents, monitoring tools, site visit reports,
Website	Posting of scheduled events

5. The Cost of the Program

The Safety First Program was funded by Office of Traffic Safety and CalWORKs dollars. The following is the estimated annual cost to develop, operate and maintain the Safety First Program in San Diego County.

Item	Approximate Annual Costs
Analyst II (development/monitoring)	\$119,995
Fiscal Senior Account Clerk processed	\$17,426

National Association of COUNTIES 2006 Achievement Award Program
Nomination Summary
Safety First Program– San Diego, California

invoice for payments – in-kind	
Contract Staff (disseminate safety training/equipment)	\$1,211,948
Safety Seat Vouchers (1,370 safety seats and 1,431 booster seats)	\$99,991

6. Success of the Program

The Safety First Program goal for car safety seat distribution utilizing Office of Traffic Safety Grant funds was exceeded by distributing an additional 3000 safety seats. Certified technicians properly installed 100% of safety seats. Over 14,000 flyers were distributed exceeding the goal of 10,000. The target of attaining 6 certified technicians was exceeded by one. In addition, one per diem staff person was trained to assist with car seat installation. The objective of safety seat education was met through safety checks and instructional classes conducted at health fairs, Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) sites, area schools, and community clinics in conjunction with other various community-based organizations.

Utilizing CalWORKs funds and building upon a very successful car safety seat distribution program, the highly effective community-based childhood injury prevention training and education program for CalWORK's clients was launched. Drawing on a successful partnership with Children's Hospital, an enhanced program was introduced that reached beyond child passenger safety to include injury prevention and training services. The goal of the injury prevention and training program was to increase parental awareness and knowledge about childhood safety in their environment, minimize injuries related to accidents in their homes, vehicles, and other areas, and to promote safe physical activity for families enrolled in CalWORKs.

The Maternal and Child Health Initiative at San Diego State University Graduate School of Public Health conducted an evaluation of the CalWORKs injury prevention and training program and concluded that the program demonstrated an effective approach to both raising awareness and impacting behavioral change.

Based on the extraordinary success of this program a Memorandum of Agreement between the County and Children's Hospital was established allowing the program to continue for an additional seven months at no cost to the County.

The development of this model ensured continuous improvement in child passenger safety by incorporating an established regional approach that built capacity and provided each HHSA

region with educational materials, car safety seat vouchers for CalWORKs families (coordinated and distributed through regional staff), and equipment and videos of child passenger safety.

7. Worthiness of an Award

The Safety First Program exceeded program goals, raised parental awareness and knowledge about childhood safety and wellness, developed innovative approaches to deliver valuable services, and created the necessary infrastructure to sustain the program beyond funding availability.

The Safety First Program is an excellent example of countywide coordination and private/public partnerships that promote and strengthen the public's health and safety. The partnership between County staff and Children's Hospital and Health Center staff demonstrates the County's commitment to internal and external collaboration and to community-based programs. The success of the injury prevention component of the program has generated interest from other hospital groups across the United States also working with CalWORKs families. Another unique aspect is the evaluation component that allows for validation and replication of the program. The Safety First Program blended funding and developed creative approaches in the provision of comprehensive preventive services to San Diego County children and communities.